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Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 21 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Cujba (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Republic of Moldova)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*)

Draft resolution on the Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/63/L.7)

1. **The Chairman** read out minor corrections to the French version.

2. *Draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.7 was adopted.*

3. **Mr. Ripert** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Albania and, in addition, Ukraine, welcomed the consensus on the draft resolution. The European Union reaffirmed its support for the Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution which would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. It expressed its full support for the Manhasset negotiations initiated by Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) and for implementation of Security Council resolution 1813 (2008), which, inter alia, called upon the parties to show realism and a spirit of compromise and to engage in substantive negotiations. The European Union further welcomed the commitment of the parties to continue to show political will and work in an atmosphere propitious for dialogue, in order to enter into a more intensive phase of negotiations, in good faith and without preconditions. A return to the situation that existed prior to the adoption of Security Council resolution 1754 (2007) would be a major setback for hopes of resolving the conflict and would prolong an unacceptable situation for the population, especially in refugee camps. The construction of a united, stable and integrated Maghreb was largely dependent on finding a solution to the conflict in Western Sahara.

4. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that by adopting the draft resolution by consensus, the Committee had reaffirmed that the question of Western Sahara was one of decolonization and that the international community was committed to a successful conclusion of that process. The Committee had also reaffirmed its commitment to the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their right to self-determination as part of a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution pursuant to Security Council resolution 1754 (2007). The second and third preambular paragraphs and paragraph 3 of the draft resolution clarified the desired objective of the negotiations between the two parties, the Frente POLISARIO and Morocco, which Algeria could only welcome.

5. Algeria would spare no efforts in assisting the Saharawi and Moroccan peoples, its fraternal neighbours, in their search for a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution that would serve to strengthen relations between all the peoples of the region.

6. **Mr. Sahel** (Morocco) also welcomed the consensus on the draft resolution. The text met legitimate expectations in that it incorporated the developments of the past year and reflected the international community's desire to support and encourage the new momentum to achieve a political solution that had arisen from Morocco's autonomy proposal. The negotiations that had resulted were thought by some to have the potential to resolve the regional dispute in question. Morocco welcomed the fact that the text incorporated developments relating to implementation of Security Council resolutions 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007) and 1813 (2008); that it called on the parties to enter into a more intensive phase of negotiations; and that it reflected a unified approach to the issue on the part of the General Assembly and Security Council. The spirit of compromise and realism shown by the parties during the drafting stage was also to be applauded. It was Morocco's sincere wish to see an end to the dispute, in the interests not only of the peoples of the Maghreb, but of all international partners.

7. *The meeting was suspended at 3.33 p.m. and resumed at 3.37 p.m.*

Agenda item 32: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/63/21 and A/63/258)

8. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation attached importance to the development of a new worldwide information system which was equitable and reflected the principles of the United Nations and international law. In a world beset by conflict, the Department of Public Information played an important role in spreading the Organization's message of peace and it was also instrumental in focusing attention on such issues as terrorism, climate change and food security. The Department should be

commended, in particular, for its work on the question of Palestine and it should continue to make every effort to raise international awareness of that question.

9. Having reviewed the Secretary-General's report (A/63/258), his delegation welcomed the efforts aimed at rationalizing the network of United Nations information centres, particularly in developed countries. However, he stressed that information centres in developing countries should be expanded in view of the role they played in capacity-building and in training journalists.

10. While welcoming the Department's efforts to improve the United Nations website, his delegation stressed that greater effort was required to achieve, without delay, parity among the official languages of the Organization. Specifically, the Arabic pages of the website needed to be improved and resources should therefore be allocated for that purpose.

11. His delegation was troubled by the lack of transparency in the evolution of the *UN Chronicle* into a journal entitled "UN Affairs". The Department had published a pilot issue of "UN Affairs" without first obtaining the approval of the General Assembly. His delegation intended to follow closely discussions concerning the new magazine in the Group of 77 and in the Arab Group and stressed that it should be published in all official languages, including Arabic.

12. The Department also needed to provide more extensive coverage of events in Africa and should focus, in particular, on programmes and activities aimed at implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

13. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan) said that it was incumbent on the Department to ensure that the message of the United Nations reached the peoples of developing nations. To that end, it was necessary to close the digital divide between developed and developing States, while continuing to make use of traditional means of communication, such as radio, television and print.

14. Parity among the six official languages was also vital to effective communications between the Organization and the peoples of its Member States. While English and French would remain the working languages of the Secretariat, the Department was encouraged to use all official languages in its activities and to enter into partnerships in order to disseminate the message of the United Nations in other languages.

15. His delegation had reviewed carefully the pilot issue of the journal entitled "UN Affairs", which was to be the successor to *UN Chronicle*, and was of the view that the Department should take the best elements from both and combine them into a new publication. He also looked forward to greater coverage of the positive developments that had occurred since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement.

16. The report of the Secretary-General had always included a section on the Department's activities in relation to the question of Palestine, an issue of great importance to the United Nations. Noting that the current report lacked any information in that regard, he called on the Department to ensure that such information was included in future reports.

17. **Mr. Al Hadhrami** (Yemen) said that his delegation attached great importance to the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine and was disappointed that there had been no mention of that programme in the report of the Secretary-General. While welcoming the appointment of a new director for the United Nations information centre in Sana'a, he noted that that director had yet to assume his post. He therefore urged the Department to appoint a replacement in view of the important role the centre played in disseminating information about the Organization to the people of Yemen, which was one of the least developed countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

18. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her Government had observed first-hand the use being made by the United Nations of new communications technologies. Direct Internet transmission of the annual DPI/NGO Conference, for example, had made it possible for a recently released hostage to tell the world in dramatic terms how the terrorist Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) were violating the human rights of Colombian citizens and how the Government was striving to guarantee them.

19. The Secretary-General's report pointed to a marked increase in the use of the United Nations website, particularly the video materials posted on the Internet. The expanded audience and its interactive capacity demanded more professional responsibility in the gathering and transmitting of data.

20. The Department of Public Information was doing important work in publicizing the principles, activities and objectives of the Organization. It was effectively supported in those tasks by the United Nations

information centres, and they should be strengthened. The training organized by the Department for the staff of the regional information centres would allow them to train and inform others in their own region. Her delegation hoped that the information centre in Colombia would be able to take advantage of such training. Noting that the Committee on Information was giving thought to reorganizing the information centres, she said that it should bear in mind the individual characteristics of each centre and consult with the host countries. Multilingualism had to be an essential feature of the United Nations communications strategies.

21. The Department's efforts to foster dialogue with delegations and keep them informed about its activities were useful and should be broadened. Her delegation welcomed the electronic access to documents in more than 80 languages provided by the Department through the website of United Nations information centres.

22. The pilot edition of *UN Affairs* seemed to be a promising initiative, but it was a pity to have to choose between *UN Affairs* and *UN Chronicle*, for both had their own advantages and audiences. The contents of *UN Chronicle* could be modified to accommodate new approaches, or a chapter could be included covering issues of greater interest to the academic community.

23. **Mr. Saripudin** (Indonesia) observed that in an increasingly complicated world, disseminating to the whole world as much information about the Organization as the Department of Public Information did was a challenging assignment. The network of United Nations information centres, services and components was becoming increasingly integrated with the United Nations country teams. The use of the United Nations website was expanding remarkably and it was fast becoming an essential resource for news and information.

24. The Department was dealing with important international issues in such areas as peacekeeping, the Millennium Development Goals, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, climate change and human rights. Its worldwide network was now better structured and efficient as well as better equipped. Progress had been furthered tremendously by a highly professional communications strategy that focused on clear target audiences and appropriate new technologies. The Department would be indispensable in maintaining the momentum created by the recent United Nations Climate Change Conference by keeping the issue on the front page and in the headlines.

25. As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia knew from experience how valuable dissemination of information was to United Nations peacekeeping, and it welcomed the close cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

26. Informed mass media played a critical role in promoting understanding, respect and tolerance among faiths, cultures and civilizations, for they could spread a positive and unifying message, or a divisive one. The Department of Public Information could do vital work in sensitizing the mass media throughout the world to the need to combat the practice of stereotyping. Freedom of expression brought with it the responsibility to serve the highest interest of all and not to cause offence. The Department must also use its worldwide presence to foster dialogue among civilizations and a culture of peace.

27. **Mr. Khan** (Bangladesh), noting that his delegation supported the Department's efforts to continually publicize issues of importance to the international community, said that, as one of the largest troop-contributing countries to United Nations peacekeeping operations, Bangladesh welcomed the cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and would like to see the role of the peacekeepers and the troop-contributing countries better highlighted in the Department of Public Information's multimedia activities. Military personnel and civilian police from Bangladesh were currently involved in some of the toughest peacekeeping challenges around the world and a number had died in the process. When peacekeepers were honoured, locally and internationally, the ideals of peace and justice were honoured.

28. Noting that 2009 would mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of his country's entry into the United Nations he asked the Department to consider producing a video and a radio programme highlighting Bangladesh's contribution to peacekeeping and other humanitarian activities to mark that occasion. Similar programmes should be produced to honour similar landmark events of other Member States, in order to give their people a greater sense of ownership of the United Nations and its work.

29. The staff of the United Nations Information Centre in Dhaka often brought educational materials to neglected schools in remote areas with limited exposure

to international information, and his delegation hoped that the Department would provide the Centre with training and upgrade its technology.

30. The Department should also focus on efforts by Member States to promote democracy and protect democratic gains; it could, for instance, mark the forthcoming national elections in his country that would transfer power to elected representatives by producing a television programme recording that celebration of democratic values.

31. He also urged the Department to publicize such issues as climate change and the worldwide food crisis — both of which threatened his country — and to bridge the information gap by tying together skills and knowledge from across the globe, thus promoting a platform for fighting the challenges collectively.

32. *Mr. Cujba (Republic of Moldova), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

33. **Mr. Habib** (Lebanon) praised the Department of Public Information, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and the Peacebuilding Support Office for their close cooperation on the media campaign that had been undertaken to support the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the commencement of peacekeeping operations. As host to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), his country was highly aware of the important role that the media played in conveying an accurate picture of the Organization's work.

34. The Secretariat was to be commended for expanding its use of modern communications tools and for enhancing the United Nations website. He urged the Secretariat to continue its efforts to achieve parity among the Organization's six official languages, including Arabic, and to ensure that the United Nations website was easily accessible in all languages.

35. Welcoming the annual training given by the special information programme on Palestine to journalists from the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he called on the Department to redouble its efforts in support of the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination and to establish an independent State. It was also incumbent on the Department to support States in their rightful efforts to recover occupied territories.

36. The United Nations was to be commended for strengthening the technical infrastructure of its information centres throughout the developing world, in particular in the Arab countries. In that connection, training courses and workshops should be increased in order to endow those centres with human resources that complemented their modernized infrastructures. On the question of the rationalization of the network of United Nations information centres, he said it was imperative to consult the countries in which existing information centres were located prior to taking any action.

37. In respect of the proposal to replace *UN Chronicle* with a journal entitled "UN Affairs", he said that, whatever its title, the primary goal of the publication would remain unchanged, namely, to convey clearly and objectively information about matters with which the Organization was concerned. The magazine should be published in all six official languages.

38. **Mr. Mori** (Japan) welcomed the priority given by the Department of Public Information to peace and security, development and human rights and its efforts to rationalize its operations. Earlier in the year, Japan had hosted various important international events: at the G-8 Summit Meeting, the Department had arranged a number of high-level meetings, public lectures and press conferences that promoted a positive image of the United Nations in Japan and provided an opportunity to mobilize the entire United Nations system around a strategy for short- and medium-term food security while renewing the commitment to the Millennium Development Goals.

39. The United Nations information centres did valuable work in informing the public in 80 local languages around the world. The Department had done much to improve the working of the centres, as described in the Secretary-General's report. Earlier that year, Japan had worked with the Department in organizing a strategic communications workshop for Asia and the Pacific, which had been attended by Department officials and information centre directors from the region and which had advanced the cause of capacity-building and networking.

40. The Japanese Foreign Ministry and the Department had organized a joint seminar on 60 years of United Nations peacekeeping, bringing together members of academia, opinion leaders and government officials to discuss the current challenges to peace and security. Having just been elected as a non-permanent Member of the Security Council, Japan looked forward to playing a constructive role in promoting and maintaining international peace and security.

41. **Mr. Davide** (Philippines) paid tribute to the Department's efforts to promote the priority issues of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. The Department had broadened its reach, inter alia, by strengthening linkages with Member States, the United Nations system as a whole and civil society, and by making effective use of traditional as well as non-traditional media.

42. He hoped that sustained efforts would be made to bridge the digital divide and that the Department would make full use of new technology to improve public access to information about the United Nations, including its response to climate change and the energy, food and financial crises. It was to be hoped that the Department would also help the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to promote inter-religious dialogue and cooperation as part of ongoing efforts to foster the culture of dialogue among civilizations.

43. The Department also played an important role in shaping public perception of United Nations peacekeeping operations, heralding the accomplishments of the Blue Helmets and positively projecting the participation of troop-contributing countries, such as the Philippines. The Department had also helped address the sexual exploitation and abuse scandal, resulting in a significant decline in allegations and sensational media reports.

44. The Media Accreditation and Liaison Unit, for its part, should be commended for overseeing press coverage of the opening of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. Efforts should be made to develop a system that would guarantee access for all members of the media.

45. **Mr. Al-Shatti** (Kuwait) after commending the Department's efforts to keep up with developments in communications technology, said that it was imperative to ensure that the media were used to promote dialogue among all peoples rather than as a tool for imposing a particular culture or ideology. There should be parity among the official languages, including Arabic, in the Department's activities.

46. The Department should redouble its assistance to developing countries in order to help close the digital divide and should continue its efforts to ensure that journalists were able to carry out their professional duties freely and effectively. All acts of aggression against journalists should be strongly condemned. The Department should also continue its efforts aimed at focusing attention on and raising international awareness of the question of Palestine.

47. Kuwait stood ready to cooperate with all international efforts to increase freedom of the media, as long as those efforts did not conflict with Arab and Islamic traditions and values.

48. **Ms. Ho** Moon Shin (Singapore) said that new information and communications technology (ICT) had created vast opportunities for economic growth and social development; it also had a role to play in poverty eradication. In an age when information was so readily available and empowering, it was all the more necessary to bridge the digital gap. The Department of Public Information had been reaching out to millions of people through both new and traditional means of communication. It had been active in tailoring messages for different target audiences and had engaged film-makers to bring the work of the United Nations to a wider public. The comic book featuring well-known superheroes such as Spiderman should be distributed to young audiences the world over, not only to schools in the United States.

49. In order to maintain its credibility the department must ensure that the information it provided was accurate and balanced. Indeed, the Organization as a whole must have the courage to admit errors and take appropriate action where necessary and it must defend itself robustly against false allegations.

50. Everyone had the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as well as the freedom to seek and receive accurate information, including with respect to actions being undertaken in their interests by their Governments and the United Nations. That freedom must, however, be exercised responsibly. The truth must be sought and spoken with due respect and care, without overstepping limits.

51. **Mr. Kang** Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that while information activities could play an important role in promoting world peace and sustainable development, certain countries continued to misuse information technologies. Taking advantage of their monopoly on information media, they sought to impose their own values and lifestyles by disseminating distorted information and even instigating the overthrow of systems. One example of such activity was "Radio Free Asia", which the United States was using to target Asian countries, including his own, in clear violation of the principles and purposes of the Charter.

52. The first and foremost task was to establish a new and just international information order. The international community should take substantive measures to ensure that such an order was established. Particular attention should be paid to helping developing countries enhance their information and communication capabilities, in order to enable them to participate equally in international information activities and to ensure fairness and accuracy. Most developing countries were currently marginalized from the rapid development of information technologies despite their strenuous efforts at capacity-building. Developed countries and international organizations should enhance cooperation in such areas as the transfer of advanced technologies to and financial investment in the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries.

53. His delegation also looked forward to greater efforts by the Department to improve information capacity and train broadcasters and journalists from developing countries.

54. **Mr. Malmierca Díaz** (Cuba) said that the rapid development of communications and information technology had not addressed the growing "digital divide" between rich and poor countries. The flow of information was marked by distortions; news was spread or silenced depending on whether or not it suited the needs of the powerful, and freedom of expression and of information suffered accordingly. Clearly a new world information and communications order was needed.

55. The developing world should be given special treatment in the United Nations information system and United Nations information centres throughout the world should play a more active role in disseminating balanced information, taking into account the needs of the audience at whom the message was aimed. Broadcast media such as radio should continue to be promoted as a means of informing the vast illiterate populations of the South. In that regard, Cuba had implemented a literacy programme of its own in 15 countries, using audiovisual aids and new information technologies to enhance the effectiveness of teaching materials.

56. Once again, his delegation wished to denounce the radio and television aggression that the United States Government continued to aim at his country. Those broadcasts contravened international law as well as the rules and procedures of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU). His Government had denounced them in every appropriate forum. Each week, United States-based stations broadcast to Cuba more than 1,920 hours of radio and television through 32 different frequencies. In a new escalation of that aggression, the United States Government had begun using military aircraft to beam signals into Cuba. Of the 27 stations broadcasting subversive programmes against Cuba, 22 aimed their signals directly towards the country; three of them were the property of the United States Government. Some of the stations could be linked to terrorists who lived in United States territory. In condemning those acts of aggression, his delegation reiterated that the choice of the kind of information that the Cuban people wished to receive was a sovereign decision of his country and not of the United States Government.

57. **Mr. Tiendrebeogo** (Burkina Faso) said that the public should be made better aware not only of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, but also of the revitalization process currently under way. The Department of Public Information should play a more central, catalytic role in strengthening system-wide coherence in the context of the reforms.

58. Through its network of information centres, the Department provided a vital source of information for Member States and for the United Nations system as a whole. The Information Centres were crucial to the Department's awareness-raising, training and information-gathering activities, particularly in developing countries and any rationalization must occur on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with host countries. The regional information centre in Ouagadougou played a vital role in raising the visibility of United Nations operational activities for development and provided logistical support for Governments, academia and the media. Although the strengthening of certain information centres must be welcomed, adequate resources should be made available across the board.

59. **Mr. Chávez** (Peru) said that his country upheld the value of freedom of expression and of the press in democratic societies, even in societies in conflict or emerging from conflict.

60. The regional United Nations information centres should adopt an approach that followed Headquarters guidelines but also took into account consultations with the individual information centres in their regions, each of which could contribute its own expertise on United

Nations issues. Information centres in neighbouring countries, which often faced similar problems, could most usefully deal directly between themselves. Equipping some information centres with more staff and assigning them coordinating functions would allow the network of information centres to present a clear and consistent message on the part of the United Nations. Culture and history, geographical proximity and the level of technological development, which varied from country to country and region to region, were the most relevant criteria in that connection.

61. In Latin America, the United Nations information centres worked flexibly and cooperatively with each other on various United Nations campaigns such as ending violence against women. Such networking would be facilitated by greater use of the Internet. His Government supported the work of the United Nations Information Centre in Lima, whose work with Peruvian troops about to serve in the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) had been very valuable. In Peru itself, the Friends of the United Nations Club programme had allowed young people of high-school age to spread the United Nations message.

62. The Department of Public Information should highlight the specific benefits the United Nations brought to the inhabitants of the various countries, in such areas as humanitarian assistance in disasters, peacekeeping, sustainable development, climate change and public health systems.

63. In addition, it was important that there should be parity among all six of the official languages. Peru welcomed the closer ties between the Department and the Office of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. In future it would be interesting to have more details about expanded coverage of the activities of the main United Nations bodies and the Peacebuilding Commission, and their interaction with the countries concerned.

64. The Department had effectively transmitted the meetings of the main bodies and conferences in the original languages through Internet videos. Missions and United Nations information centres could profit from greater access to the United Nations Intranet. The Department's activities publicizing the work of the United Nations among academics, analysts, opinion leaders and civil society had been commendable. In launching the publication *UN Affairs*, the Department should ensure parity of official languages and issue it without drawing budgetary resources away from other activities.

65. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) said that the failure to include, in the report of the Secretary-General, any details of the Department's activities relating to the question of Palestine was a deeply disturbing and highly regrettable omission. The special information programme on the subject, for instance, was very useful in raising awareness of the international community concerning the question of Palestine, as stated in General Assembly resolution 62/82, which had been adopted by an overwhelming majority. He profoundly appreciated the support demonstrated for that programme, which also effectively contributed to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process. The Palestine and Decolonization Section of the Department additionally played a vital role through its organization of seminars on the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace and its development of digital film archives documenting the history of the Palestinian question for the benefit of researchers and educational institutions, an activity to which he hoped special attention would be devoted. He commended the Department's efforts for inclusion of the permanent exhibition on Palestine in the guided tours for visitors to the United Nations and hoped that the revised edition of the booklet entitled *The Question of Palestine and the United Nations* would soon be available in all six official languages.

66. He attached great importance to the Department's continuing assistance to the Palestinian people in the field of media development, in particular its training programmes for Palestinian broadcasters and journalists; their participation in such programmes was crucial, notwithstanding the obstacles placed in their way by the occupying Power. In addition to such illegal and inhumane practices as the ongoing construction of the separation wall and the imposition of collective punishment on the Palestinian people, Israeli occupying forces constantly targeted journalists who attempted to portray the truth and some had been killed in the process. The perpetrators had, moreover, been cleared of any wrongdoing, which served as testimony to Israel's persistence in covering up its war crimes against Palestinian civilians, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. In that same context, he cited details of the brutal harassment of prize-winning Palestinian journalist Mohammed Omer, whose case was fully documented in

section III A of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 (A/63/326).

67. Such grave violations of human rights were further compounded by the acts of violence and intimidation perpetrated against Palestinian civilians by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Indeed, in the latest incident only two days earlier, settlers had attacked and injured not only Palestinian farmers and journalists, but also foreign peace activists. He consequently emphasized the need for Israel to comply with General Assembly resolution 62/82, in particular paragraph 3 (d) concerning the organization and promotion of fact-finding news missions for journalists to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, in the interests of factual reporting on the ground.

68. Given the Israeli control of Palestine's frequency spectrum and the denial of direct access to communication and information services, the Palestinian people were also perpetually impeded in their ability to keep pace with technological advances. Progress along the road to knowledge and development could not be achieved without an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Syrian Golan and the Shab'a farmlands in Lebanon. Only with the resulting establishment of a lasting, just and comprehensive peace would the peoples of the region be able to exercise their legitimate rights, including the right to harness information and technology with a view to, inter alia, sustainable development, job creation and poverty eradication.

Rights of reply

69. **Mr. Traystman** (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his Government had steadfastly observed its international obligations, particularly those of the ITU concerning avoidance of harmful interference with the services of other countries. For 49 years, the people of Cuba had been denied the right to choose their own representatives, to voice their opinions without fear of reprisal, and to meet or organize freely.

70. The Cuban Government's opposition to Radio and TV Martí was driven by fear of the consequences if the Cuban people were to receive uncensored information about their own country and the world around them. Life for the Cuban people could not improve under their current repressive system of government.

71. **Ms. Hernández Toledano** (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that contrary to what the representative of the United States wanted those present to believe, the radio and television aggression of that country against Cuba served only to demonstrate that Government's total disregard for the norms governing international relations. Only the Cuban people had the right to decide how and about what they should be informed.

72. The Government of the country that claimed to defend the principles of democracy and human rights lacked moral authority and credibility to speak about human rights in any country. It was not Cuba but the Government of the United States that was responsible for unilateral wars that violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and it was the United States that defended the crimes committed daily against the Palestinian people, that flouted human rights during the conflict in Lebanon, and that tortured prisoners in Guantánamo Naval Base and in Abu Ghraib. Cuba would continue to denounce, in all appropriate forums, all policies of blockade and aggression against it by the United States.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.